

PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE, BREEZEWOOD INTERCHANGE
Near SR 2029 about 1 mile SW of Breezewood
Breezewood vicinity
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-349

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE, BREEZEWOOD INTERCHANGE HAER No. PA-349

Location: Near SR 2029 about 1 mile SW of
Breezewood
Breezewood (vic.)
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1938-40, 1969-70

Present Owner: Pennsylvania Turnpike

Present Use: Highway Interchange, Tollbooths,
Administrative Offices

Significance: Constructed near the intersection of
U.S. 30 and SR 126 which led south into
Maryland and Virginia, the Breezewood
Plaza is one of eleven original
interchanges along the turnpike where
motorists exited or entered the
turnpike. By the time the plaza was
rebuilt in 1969-70, the nearby town of
Breezewood was home to numerous gas
stations and motels that had been
erected to serve the ever-increasing
number of motorists.

Historian: Kim E. Wallace, 1994

Project Information: The results of the study of Bedford
County were published in 1994: Kim E.
Wallace (ed), Bedford County and Fulton
County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of
Historic Engineering and Industrial
Sites (Washington, D.C.: National Park
Service). The contents of the
publication were transmitted to the
Library of Congress as individual
reports. Research notes, field photos
and copies of historic photos collected
during the project were transmitted to
the AIHP Collection, Special
Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana
University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA
15705.

Nine "dusty" blue tollbooths on a north-south axis record entering and exiting vehicles at the Breezewood turnpike interchange. There is a one-story, flat-roofed office building on the north end of the row of tollbooths. A service road connects a parking lot for turnpike employees on the north side of the office building to SR 2029. A 1-mile-long access road leads northeast from the tollbooths to U.S. 30 at Breezewood.

In 1935 the Pennsylvania legislature authorized a feasibility study for using the roadbed of the South Penn Railroad to build a highway across the mountains of south-central and western Pennsylvania. The idea was developed by state planners with the expectation of receiving financing through federal New Deal public works programs. Final federal support for the project was secured October 10, 1938 and construction began October 27.

The new road was distinctive for a number of reasons: It was built as a toll road that planners claimed would eventually pay for the cost of its construction and maintenance; it was promoted as an "all-weather" highway because tunnels and a uniform road surface were to lessen weather-related driving hazards; the turnpike contained standard design elements across its entire length of 160 miles; and it was a "limited access" highway, meaning access on and off the highway would be limited to a number of interchanges and any other grade crossings of local roads or railroads routed under or over the turnpike so that traffic flow was not interrupted. Limiting access, eliminating grade crossings, and design features such as banked curves and low grades of ascent were all intended to make high-speed, cross-country automobile travel safe and efficient. The Pennsylvania Turnpike was the first such "superhighway" in the United States. Its only precedent were the German autobahns built in the mid 1930s.

Construction was completed within two years and the turnpike opened October 1, 1940. The turnpike extended from Irwin, just east of Pittsburgh, to Carlisle, just west of Harrisburg. Driving between the two points on the turnpike took one-half to almost two-thirds less time than it did on U.S. 30, Lincoln Highway, or U.S. 22, the William Penn Highway. Seven two-lane tunnels eliminated the steepest climbs over the mountains. Ten service plazas with gas stations, rest rooms, and restaurants were an integral part of the limited access design providing essential services for a self-sufficient highway. There were eleven interchanges along the turnpike where motorists exited or entered the turnpike through tollbooths originally called ticket offices. Interchanges were located to give access to major roads along the turnpike's route. The Breezewood interchange was sited near the intersection of U.S. 30 and SR 126 which led south into

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Maryland and Virginia. The village of Breezewood was located along U.S. 30 about .25 mile west of the interchange.

The Pennsylvania Turnpike set the precedent for subsequent cross-state tollroads and for the U.S. interstate highway system. During its first year of operation, 2.4 million vehicles crossed the turnpike, almost two times planners' estimates. Plans for extensions of the highway were soon approved, but World War II delayed construction. The eastern extension to Philadelphia was opened in November 1950, and the western extension to Ohio was opened in December 1951. The turnpike reached across the Delaware River to New Jersey in May 1956. The Northeast Extension to Scranton opened in November 1957.

After the turnpike opened, the Breezewood interchange was heavily used as a connecting point on one of the most direct routes between the midwest and southeast. The route was particularly favored by military personnel and their families who were stationed in the Norfolk and Baltimore-Washington areas during World War II and the Cold War years. Gas stations, and a few restaurants and motels, were built to serve this traffic along U.S. 30 and SR 126 near the interchange. Because of the traffic volume and demand on SR 126 it was selected to be replaced as part of the Interstate highway system. Construction of the new Interstate 70, a four-lane divided highway, from Baltimore and Washington into Breezewood was completed in 1966.

The Breezewood interchange was completely replaced in 1969-70. The reconstruction was part of a decade-long turnpike improvement program to upgrade the turnpike to accommodate a traffic volume many times higher than those projected during original designing. The turnpike's tunnels, where traffic had to change from four to two lanes, were often the sites of traffic backups, and during the 1960s parallel tunnels were built at four of the tunnels to provide unrestricted passage on four lanes. Bypasses were built around the three remaining two-lane tunnels. A 13.5-mile bypass was built from Breezewood east around the Ray's Hill and Sideling Hill tunnels. It was opened in November 1968. In part because of this project and in part to accommodate the capacity of the new Interstate 70, the Breezewood interchange was redesigned and relocated about one mile southwest of Breezewood. Designers for the bypass and interchange were the engineering firms of Buchart-Horn based in York and Bellante and Clauss of Scranton. The New Enterprise Stone and Lime Company was the contractor for the east and west sections of the new construction. Nello L. Teer Company won the contract for the central section. Part of the old turnpike was converted into an access road leading from U.S. 30 in Breezewood to the new interchange where ten tollbooths were installed. The new interchange was opened in July 1970.

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Sources:

- Catone, John D., ed. Pennsylvania Turnpike Tunnels: A History of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. Ca. 1979.
- Cupper, Dan. The Pennsylvania Turnpike: A History. Lebanon, Pa.: Applied Arts Publishers, 1990.
- Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. The Pennsylvania Turnpike. Brochure, "courtesy of Standard Oil Company of Pennsylvania," printed August 1940.
- Shank, William H. Vanderbilt's Folly: A History of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. York, Pa.: American Canal and Transportation Center, 1973.